

At the December 19, 2006 council meeting, City Council approved an Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) and water meter replacement project. This initiative is intended to improve water meter accuracy, eliminate estimated bills, reduce meter reading cost, and allow us to provide immediate and accurate responses to your meter reading and billing questions. The City of Eureka Public Works is pleased to announce that AMR project will be starting within the next few weeks. These radio-read equipped water meters will enable Public Works to read your water meter from a passing vehicle, eliminating the need to manually read and record the meter readings.

This is how it works. Your existing water meter will be replaced with a new water meter that has been fitted with an electronic reading transmitter. The new meter will transmit your water meter reading via radio frequency 24 hours a day, allowing a specially equipped vehicle to collect the meter reads. Therefore, a radio-read meter must be installed to all properties. We are installing the meters in one district of the City at a time. You will be contacted when we are working in your area.

The City's installation contractor, Wahlund Construction, Inc., will install the water meter and transmitter in the city's meter box. Once we are working in your area, you will be notified by the contractor and informed of your areas work schedule. In most cases, you will not need to be home for this work to be accomplished. The service work takes about 30 minutes

### **FAQ**

In preparation for the installation of the new AMR system, please read all questions and answers. If you have any questions about the installation and how the system works, please call 268-5253 and City of Eureka Public Works staff will address them.

#### **Q1: What is an AMR Project?**

**A1:** The AMR Program means Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) and Meter Replacement Program. This 1 year city wide project will replace all old meters with new, state of the art meters that will allow the City to obtain meter readings using radio frequency technology. The readings will be collected by a specially equipped vehicle and the information will be downloaded into the City's financial software for billing. This means you will always be billed from actual meter readings.

#### **Q2: Where is my water meter?**

**A2:** The vast majority of water meters are in meter boxes located in the sidewalk in front of the residence.

#### **Q3: Why do I need a new meter?**

**A3:** The average age of Eureka water meters is 15 years old. Consequently, they produce high maintenance costs and are becoming less accurate. Customers that have newer water meters will receive only the electronic transmitter device.

#### **Q4: How does the new meter reading system work and how do I know you have my reading and not someone else's?**

**A4:** The electronic transmitter device installed in the meter box is programmed to automatically send the meter reading every 4 seconds 24 hours a day, the signal is then picked up by the specially equipped service vehicle. The meter reading information is then downloaded to the City's financial software. Each meter and transmitter has a unique identification number that ensures that only your reading is assigned to your account. The meter reading information is unloaded into the city's data system for customer questions and billing.

#### **Q5: When can I expect my first bill?**

**A5:** You will continue to receive your bill on the same schedule.

**Q6: Will my water bill go up?**

**A6:** Older meters tend to run slower and therefore do not measure all the water going through them. The new water meter will accurately measure the water that you use. All new meters are tested at the factory to ensure that they register properly. If you see a higher bill, it is usually not because your new meter is reading too high; it is because the old meter was running slow. There will be no additional charge for the installation of the automated reading system as it is being paid for with existing water revenues.

**Q7: How do you know that my reading is accurate?**

**A7:** These state of the art water meters have electronic digital registers, which verifies the meter reading before it is sent to the transmitting unit. This reading is deemed more accurate than visually reading the meter.

**Q8: How do I know if higher usage may be a result from a leak in my plumbing system?**

**A8:** A new, more accurate meter may detect small leaks that the older meter missed. If the system detects constant water usage during a 24 hour period, a warning will be sent to check for a possible leak. Check faucets for small drips. Also check your toilet tank for small leaks in the toilet bowl. Place a few drops of food coloring in your toilet tank. If the water in the bowl changes to the color of dye used in the tank, you have a leak. Seek assistance from your local home improvement center or plumbing professional to fix all such leaks.

As noted, the new AMR system records your usage 24 hours a day. In the near future, there will be sufficient meter reading data to establish a consumption pattern. This will allow for higher usage or leaks to be more easily identified when you talk with our customer service representatives about any billing questions.

**Q9: How will I be able to identify the contract employees?**

**A9:** Both the contractors vehicles and uniforms will be marked with Wahlund Construction insignias.

**Q10 : Do I have to be home for the meter replacement work?**

**A10 :** Since the water meter is located outside, there is no need to be home when the meter is installed. There may be some situations where, because of an unusual conditions or the location of the water meter, it may be necessary for Wahlund Construction personnel to work with the property owner to accomplish the meter change. In these isolated cases, Wahlund Construction personnel will make arrangements with the property owner.

**Q11: How long will the meter installation take?**

**A11:** Under normal circumstances, the installation will take about 30 minutes. The water will have to be turned off for about 5 to 10 minutes until the meter is changed. Please be advised that there may be some trapped air or slight discoloration in the water line. This will clear up after running your water for a few moments. You may hear some noise as the air exits spigots and fixtures. This is normal.

**Q12: Whom should I call if I would like more information about the AMR Project?**

**A12:** You may call the Public Works Department at 268-5253 Monday through Friday from 8:00 am - 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm.

**Q13: Whom should I call if I have a billing question resulting from the AMR Project?**

**A13:** If you have any questions regarding your water bill or utility operations, please call the City of Eureka Finance Department office at 441-4267.